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The characterisation of the values of public ethics: application to territorial public management in the province of Guangxi (China)

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Abstract

The legitimacy of politicians and public confidence in public decision-making and administration are today increasingly dependent on the way their ethics are appraised (Kolthoff et al., 2013).

The "moral pluralism and cultural diversity" of contemporary society (Boisvert, 2008) make public ethics a new theoretical framework to be explored from the point of view of the compromises it makes between the various, often conflicting values. Yet, in practice, this compromise seems to limit the values of public ethics to principles of good governance formalised around codes of conduct or managerial procedures (Rochet, 2012).

Our research question sets out to question the variety of these values. The research objective being to develop, by supplementing the conceptual framework of New Public Value (Moore, 1995, Nabatchi, 2011), a categorisation of the values of public ethics in particular by characterising the values of the ethics of interaction not yet illustrated in the literature.

Points for practitioners

In practical terms, the aim of this article is to identify and characterise more precisely the variety of ethical values mobilised by public managers. To do so, we conducted, in two stages, a survey among

public managers in Guangxi province in China, a country where the expression of personal or cultural ethics in the workplace is described in the literature as relatively natural.

Our first results suggest a fairly clear distinction between the ethical values governing the performance of public action, which are relatively well formalised, and the ethical values governing public interaction, which are more informal and closer to cultural and social rituals.

Biography

Laurent Mériade is a lecturer at the University of Auvergne and researcher at the CRCGM (France). His field of research is public management and Asian culture. His recent publications in "*@GRH*", No. 9/2013/4 and "*Gestion et Management Public*" No. 3/2013 relate to the forms of adoption of NPM tools in French and Chinese universities.

Introduction

While its relationship with public management may not be particularly new (Pauchant, 2009), the recent haul of public scandals demonstrates to what extent there is a need for ethics in contemporary public administration (Boisvert, 2008). In a more lucid and more educated society, the recognition of the ethics of public players seems to be increasingly self-evident (Rosanvallon, 2008).

In *Nicomachean Ethics*¹, Aristotle recalls the foundations of ethics, which are based on reflections on human behaviour and the implicit value systems, especially in their interactions with others. Ethics are usually defined by a set of standards and rules of conduct that are reflexive, which sets them apart from morality, which refers more to the reflections and facts related to the religious domain and the sense of obligation (Schumacher, 2006).

In public organisations, Bozeman (2007) speaks of value to characterise an individual or collective appraisal of an object or set of objects that is based on cognitive and emotional elements.

Public value is a polysemic term depending on whether it is used in the singular or plural (Chanut et al, 2015). For Moore (1995), used in the singular, public value is created by the action of public officials. In the plural, it refers to a much wider set of values corresponding to the deep-seated beliefs and orientations that guide the choices of individuals in and around organisations (Galland and Lemel, 2006).

Public values remain a "disputed" concept given the multiple definitions and shifting boundaries (Van der Wal et al, 2013). To advance the study of public values it is necessary move beyond the traditional boundaries of the administration and public management (*ibid*, p.3).

The response to the public's demand for public management ethics in the legal and bureaucratic field is to implement ethical codes of conduct, control procedures or accounting standards incorporating ethical dimensions (Kolthoff et al., 2013).

In this kind of context, the place afforded to ethical values in public values is still described as being

¹ Aristotle (2002), *Nicomachean Ethics*, Paris, Flammarion.

largely frustrated (Frederickson, 1999). Ethical values refer to values held by an individual while public values are defined collectively by the organisation. In the public sphere, these two types of values converge around the values of public ethics, which reconcile individual values and collective values.

Many studies (Préfontaine et al, 2009; Van der Wal et al, 2013; Nabatchi, 2010; 2011) base their categorisations of public values around two main paradigms - a bureaucratic ethos and a democratic ethos (Goss, 1996). They suggest the existence of a public administration ethics (*ibid.*) but few studies that have come to our knowledge have attempted to categorise ethical values in a public context. Nabatchi (2011) speaks of itinerant values to describe public values that have both a common meaning and different meanings depending on the categories to which they belong (*ibid.*). An analysis of his work reveals that individuals are the ones who are behind the itinerant nature of the values and their reconciliation between the different categories of public values defined by the organisation. Through their ability to reconcile individual and collective behaviour (Larat, 2013), the values of public ethics have a strong similarity with these itinerant values.

By building a neo-institutional approach on the basis of the institutional framework proposed by Nabatchi (*op.cit.*), our research question sets out to characterise the ethical values that public managers mobilise when performing their missions. The research objective being to propose a categorisation of public ethical values from categorisations already proposed by the conceptual framework of the New Public Value (Nabatchi, 2011).

As such, China provides us with an insight into a society that culturally sees public and private spaces as nested and recursive. On the other hand, the Chinese context has obvious limitations, consubstantial with its political system, which could consider ethics as a social control instrument in the service of the power in place. As we are unable to comment on this type of bias within the framework of a managerial article, we make use of this context due to its ability to present a framework of public interactions that places ethics at the centre of cultural and ritual values that are

less visible in Western societies.

To address our research question, our paper is organised into three parts. In the first part, we conduct a review of the literature in order to explore the place of ethics in public values. Secondly, this allows us to justify the relevance of our conceptual framework to grasp the ethical dimension of public values.

In the third part, we identify, in two stages, the results of a survey into the values of public ethics among a sample of Chinese local government managers in order to highlight the diverse origins of these values. Our first results suggest a distinction between a public ethics governing performance that is formalised in the governance procedures and rules, and an ethics of interaction with strong cultural dimensions.

1. Public values in the literature and their ethical approach

For Jorgensen (2007), public values need to be classified and analysed, as the hybrid environment in which they emerge has its origins in multiple axiological registers (economic, political, legal, cultural, managerial, etc.).

Three main research perspectives (Table 1) address the management of public values (Davis and West, 2009).

The generative perspective

A first or generative or intentional perspective offers a description of the process of creating and developing public value. It attempts to provide normative prescriptions and guidelines for public managers (Smith, 2004.) The common denominator of these studies is their focus on the importance of organisational and institutional capacities in the production of public value (Stoker, 2006). Also adopting this perspective, Hood (1995) pools public values into three families (rectitude, resilience, frugality) and raises the question of the contradictions they generate and the ways to overcome them. In this quest, Bozeman (1989) has proposed an investigation of public values through *publicness*,

which makes it possible to describe values under their political and economic influence. More recently, Gibert (2008) and Emery (2009) have repositioned *publicness* in the debates on the excesses of New Public Management (NPM), emphasising its contribution to the description of public management specificities.

The initial work on the "New Public Value" (Moore, *op.cit.*) has focused on the creation of public value from the identification of working procedures that are suitable for this purpose. As part of the paradigm of the sciences of the artificial, between positivism and constructivism (Avenier and Thomas, 2011), this work has essentially identified ethical values in their procedural dimensions.

Subsequently, noting the "joint and deliberative (construction) of public values" (O'Flynn, 2007, p. 362), later studies have attempted to affirm their differences with public bureaucracy and NPM (Mazouz et al., 2012, Levesque, 2012), by recognising more clearly the balance between personal and professional values that shape public values. Adopting institutionalist approaches, this second generation of studies has suggested broader categorisations of public values.

The institutional perspective

This second perspective sets out to identify the determinants of public value from an analysis of the normative and regulatory frameworks of public managers (Pang et al., 2014). It underlines the heterogeneity of public values that aggregates around values that are both tangible and measurable (user satisfaction, safety, durability) and others that are less tangible (trust, fairness, regularity) (Alford and O'Flynn, 2009). It tends more towards a description of public value as prescribed to actors through their training (Colon and Guérin-Schneider, 2015), the civil service competitions (Mériade and Qiang, 2015), or legislation and regulations (Smith, *op.cit.*). It considers that organisations are influenced by the social systems in which they are situated. The institutionalisation of ideas or opinions allows the latter to build their legitimacy. The main institutionalist studies touching on public values have focused on the effects of this institutionalisation (outcomes) on society (Bozeman, 2007; Feeney and Welch, 2012).

These institutional approaches to public values offer at least two paradigms associated with these values - a bureaucratic ethos and a democratic ethos (Goss, 1996). Préfontaine et al. (2009) make a distinction between declared public values, more democratic, which they call "legitimate" (fairness, loyalty, responsibility, transparency, accountability), and more bureaucratic public values arising from private principles of action (respect for rules, caution, predictability, integrity) and that are often less easy to "declare".

Barrett (1998), in a cultural approach to values in the organisation, makes an interesting connection between personal and organisational values associated respectively with the democratic and bureaucratic ethos. In their literature review of public values, Van der Wal et al. (2008) clearly make a democratic and bureaucratic distinction by talking both of moral values such as honesty or responsibility and instrumental values such as efficiency and legality.

However, these studies make the assumption of a normative conception of these "public values" that guides the administrative lines across the public sector. Van der Wal et al. (2008) show that it is very difficult to classify these values specifically and call for the development of pluralistic conceptions of public values (*ibid.*). Public values cannot be reduced to particular economic measures or the exponential production of rules and procedures (Crozier's "bureaucratic vicious circle"²), but require an analysis of the articulations between the different categories of observable values (Davis and West, *op.cit.*). Given that they merely analyse the normative frameworks and the public values that depend on them, institutionalist approaches only partly meet this goal.

The neo-institutional perspective

The neo-institutional theories (Moulton, 2009) claim that the institutionalisation may be regulatory or normative but also cultural or cognitive (Leca and Naccache, 2006). The studies into institutional economics (Coase, 1992; Williamson 1985) and political institutionalism (Ostrom, 1986 Shepsle, 1986) postulate that it is rationality that guides officials to build their institutions and obtain the

² Crozier M. (1964), *Le Phénomène bureaucratique*, Seuil, Paris

expected results. Institutions are essentially defined as stable elements that shape organisations statically and sustainably through a set of formal mechanisms for economic or political control.

Neo-institutionalism in organisation theory and sociology adopts a much more dynamic take on the organisation's environment. This is historic, cultural and cognitive as well as technical or economic. Organisations do not necessarily take up certain practices on grounds of rationality or for the purpose of efficiency but rather to comply with the institutional pressures of their environment. Institutions are no longer perceived as formal rules but as customs and social conventions, acquired in particular through socialisation and education (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983).

Within sociological and organisational neo-institutionalism (*ibid.*; Meyer and Rowan, 1991), the capacity for action of the official on the institutions is what sets apart the neo-institutionalist current from the extended neo-institutionalism current (Leca and Naccache, *op.cit.*).

The first current suggests that the official is mainly constrained by their institutional environment with which it must comply to build its own legitimacy (Leca and Naccache, *op.cit.*).

The second is based on the notion of institutional logic that integrates beliefs, rules and assumptions that actors mobilise to act on their own institutional logic (Hoffman and Ventresca, 2002). The diversity of these logics leads to inconsistencies, tensions and contradictions between the values attached to each logic, which increases the capacity of action of the officials who exploit these different tensions and contradictions to use or change the "rules of the game" (Leca and Naccache, *op.cit.*).

The neo-institutional approaches to public values (Smith, *op. cit.*; de Graaf et al, 2014) are positioned in the continuity of this last current by emphasising the emergence of different adaptation mechanisms depending on the public contexts. Studies into public ethics describe the tensions caused by the specific logic of each type of values (Bartoli et al, 2012; Mazouz et al, *op.cit.*, Boisvert, 2008) but only analyse partially the adaptation mechanisms and compromises established by the actors.

Boisvert (2008, p. 314) refers to a context of "moral pluralism and cultural diversity" that makes

public ethics a new theoretical framework to be explored in the light of the compromises it reaches between the often conflicting values (managerial/bureaucratic values, public interest/individual rights, cultural diversity/equity, efficiency/quality).

The institutionalist approach favoured by Nabatchi (2011) offers a cornerstone for the development of an extended neo-institutional approach towards public ethics. By putting the spotlight on itinerant values, it allows the interactive analysis of the values of public ethics and the ability of stakeholders to resolve contradictions or conflicts of values they face (Smith, *op cit.*). This is something that a mere categorisation of values described by the institutional perspective cannot fully grasp (Clement and Cheng, 2011).

Table 1. Theoretical approaches to public values

	Perspective générative	Perspective institutionnelle	Perspective Néo-institutionnelle
Objets de recherche	Procédures de travail Normalisation des tâches	Environnement institutionnel (règles légales, politiques, normes sociales)	Dispositifs et arrangements institutionnels (modes d'utilisation de ces règles)
Objectifs de recherche	Prescription de procédures de travail	Analyse des cadres normatifs	Analyse des pratiques normées
Positionnement épistémologique	Sciences de l'artificiel (Simon, 1969) Entre positivisme et constructivisme (Avenier et Thomas, 2011)	Constructivisme	Phénoménologie, interprétativisme (Lounnas, 2004) et Pragmatisme (Pierce, 2002)
Méthodologie de recherche	Recherche action Recherche intervention (David, 2012)	Pluralisme méthodologique (Chanteau et Labrousse, 2013). Observation participante ou non (David, <i>op.cit.</i>)	Etude de cas Méthodes mixtes quanti/quali Méthodes herméneutiques (Avenier et Thomas, 2011)
Catégorisation des valeurs publiques	La valeur publique (Moore, 1995) NPM (Hood, 1995) Valeurs organisationnelles et valeurs institutionnelles (Stoker, 2006) Publicitude (Bozeman, 1989)	Les valeurs publiques (Bozeman, 2007, Pang et al., 2014) Classification des valeurs (Jorgensen, 2007) Valeurs démocratiques et bureaucratiques (Nabatchi, 2012) Valeurs légitimes et valeurs personnelles (Préfontaine et al., 2009) Valeurs morales et valeurs instrumentales (Van Der Wal et al., 2008 ; Santo et Verrier, 2007)	Distinction valeurs gouvernementales et valeurs publiques (Scott, 2008 ; Moulton, 2009) Interface valeurs et contexte publics (Smith, 2004)
Place de l'éthique dans les valeurs publiques	Procédurale (Jacob et al., 2011, Roberts, 2010)	Normative	Interactive (Bartoli e al, 2012 ; Mazouz et al., 2012, Boisvert, 2011)

In the Chinese context, the ethical guidelines of the managers have been the subject of research (Lui and Cooper, 1997) that have confirmed the importance of collective values close to the classical Confucian ideal (administrative neutrality, loyalty to the hierarchy, respect for organisational rules). But individual values (fairness, equality, justice, honesty, integrity, human dignity and individual freedom) are also highlighted.

Lynch et al. (1997) confirm in their studies the coexistence of collective and personal values among values of public ethics while claiming the inadequacy of approaches focusing on purely administrative or political values that are prompted in particular by the secularisation of Western societies. They also propose to extend the studies by searching also in the "spiritual collective values" for justifications and characterisation of public ethical values (Lynch et al., 1997)

The theory of New Public Value (Moore, *op.cit.*) is, mistakenly (Fisher and Grant, 2013), often described as a good practice guide for public managers. Through its institutionalist studies, it has offered many categorisations of public values that make it possible to gradually deepen our understanding of the various dimensions of these values.

A neo-institutional approach can supplement these categorisations by presenting the means of exercising these values in and around their respective categories.

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2. Conceptual framework

The essential principles of the New Public Value (Nabatchi, 2011) assume that public officials and managers strive to maximise public value (Moore, *op.cit.*). In its latest developments, this theoretical current refers both to measurable and observable values (efficiency, quality, safety) and values (prudence, responsibility, listening) based on cultural or societal elements (Mazouz et al. *op.cit.*).

Nabatchi (2011) offers a comprehensive set of public values that consists of four dimensions - political, legal, organisational, and market (Table 2). The first two frameworks, political and legal, can be considered as democratic ethos while the last two, organisational and market can be included

in a subset of bureaucratic ethics.

The author also mentions a fifth category of itinerant values, which are not included in the four broken-down frameworks, but which are rather a set of values with a common meaning but that we find in several categories (Nabatchi, 2011). Ethical values have, in some ways, these characteristics and may have different meanings and interpretations depending on the category of values to which they belong.

Table 2. The dimensions of the public value universe (Nabatchi, 2011)

Dimensions	Valeurs publiques
Politique	participation, représentation, liberté et égalité
Juridique	Respect des droits individuels, procédures, transparence
Organisationnelle	Efficacité administrative, responsabilité, autorité hiérarchique

While situating public values in democratic or bureaucratic paradigms identified by the institutionalist current, this approach is interesting for its ability to categorise more comprehensively these values from their dynamic processes of emergence (political, legal, organisational and market). This allows the development of a neo-institutionalist analysis of these values around which are hinged the values of public ethics, which are naturally transversal.

By postulating the existence of itinerant public values, Nabatchi (2012) subscribes to this multifaceted approach to public values without however measuring very precisely the place of the values of public ethics.

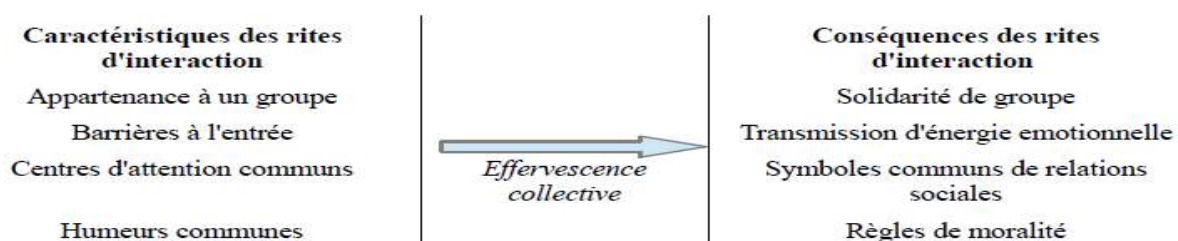
In order to justify the existence of the dynamism and itinerant nature of the values of public ethics in a neo-institutionalist perspective, we have drawn on the approaches of Goffman (1973) and Collins

(2004), which make it possible in particular to distinguish the ethical values triggered by interaction. Goffman (1973) argues that the interactions of daily life are a ritual ceremony where the sanctity of society has spread into the behaviour of the stakeholders. He identifies social interaction rituals that go beyond references to the sacred and magic of the religious ritual to describe reflexes that are common to a group or a culture and that shape social life.

Collins (2004) proposes a model (Figure 1) that connects the observed rituals and life situations, highlights the mutual involvement of the stakeholder and their social and professional interactions. For Collins (*op.cit.*) the rituals of social interaction are identifiable from four major characteristics depending on whether the ritual implies: membership of a group, a barrier to entry, a common focus of attention or a common mood. Identifying these interaction rituals is also achieved by the particular consequences they provoke (group solidarity, emotional energy, common symbols, rules of morality; Figure 1). "The collective effervescence" of the group transcends these interaction rituals to produce consequences that structure a group or community (Figure 1).

Analysis of these rituals is a rich area of study into the place of ethics in the interactions of the public managers interviewed.

Figure 1: Model of the interaction rituals (Collins, 2004, p. 48)



3. Epistemological and methodological framework

From an epistemological point of view, we are in a pragmatic paradigm (Peirce, 2002) that is particularly suitable for institutionalist and neo-institutionalist approaches. Peirce's pragmatism considers that beliefs precede knowledge, making this approach a "methodology for elucidating our

concepts and our general dispositions to think" (Tiercelin 1993, p. 34).

There is general agreement among researchers that managers are a population whose perceptions are important when building organisational cultures on the basis of the values they uphold and spread (Hlady-Rispal, 2000).

To put this epistemological posture into practice, our methodology was divided up into two stages. We began by conducting a preliminary survey in the form of an exploratory survey among a sample of 20 territorial public managers working for Guangxi Province (China). An academic and scientific exchange that has been up and running for 7 years between our university and the university of Economy and Finance of Guangxi in Nanning gave us access to this category of staff.

In 2015, the Guangxi Autonomous Region (Zhuang minority) had about 50 million inhabitants over a surface area of 236 000 km². In 1958, the region was granted an autonomous status, above all to promote the Chinese government's integration policy to the extent that the minority was already highly assimilated. This allowed the region to see its administrative prerogatives formally strengthened, particularly thanks to the possibility of having a local government and of independently administering educational, scientific, cultural, medical, sport or tourism activities. In fact, this administrative autonomy boils down to very little as, while the administrative government of the province may effectively be assigned to the recognised minority, the political government is in the hands of the president of the local Communist Party, who holds the real power. On the other hand, this administrative autonomy has allowed the region to significantly develop its workforce and its administrative hold in the province. The administration of the Guangxi region has 28 Ministries and 304 Departments that are divided between the regional level and local branches in the 14 districts (or cities-prefectures) and their cantons. The region's total personnel stands at just over 11,000, of which 1,345 are considered managers and who tend to be located in the central government in Nanning, the capital of the province.

To bring out these public values, we put together a semi-structured interview guide (Table 3) from

the results obtained in particular by the work of Nabatchi (2010; 2011). Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes and was performed by two researchers - a French-speaking Chinese researcher and a Chinese-speaking French researcher. To reduce bias related to the translation of the responses obtained, each interview was conducted simultaneously by the two researchers with the help of an audio recording. From this double translation, an axial coding using the N'Vivo software was carried out to retain the most representative public values in the performance of a territorial public service mission in China.

The use of this pre-survey was justified by the desire to have a first contact with the field to facilitate the matching of the theoretical knowledge with the specific characteristics of the population.

Table 3. Exploratory survey interview guide

Domaine	Questions
Spécificités des missions de service public	Qu'est-ce qui rend spécifique une mission ? Comment doit se comporter un fonctionnaire ? Quelles valeurs personnelles en œuvre ? Quelle est selon vous la place qu'occupe le service public dans la société ? Quel est son rôle ? Selon vous, qu'attendent les citoyens et plus globalement de l'exécution d'une mission ?
Valeurs publiques	Quelles sont les valeurs qui guident l'exécution du service public ? Comment les mettez-vous en œuvre ? Quelles sont les valeurs des managers publics ?

In a second stage, we surveyed 142 Chinese territorial public managers (department managers, financial managers, administrative managers, technical managers and social managers) working for the administration of Guangxi Province. The decision to interview territorial public managers from this regional administration is justified by the diversity of missions and jobs at the provincial level in China, in particular since the successive decentralisation laws of 1993, 2003 and 2008 (Su et al.,

2013).

The collection of the responses to the 142 questionnaires was carried out over one year (2013). The questionnaire used in the survey covered public values in four areas (political, legal, organisational and market) and included 40 questions (ten per domain). Among these questions, two to three questions per topic (ten in total) related to the ethical values of the public service. For this analytical work on public ethics, we focus only on those ten questions relating to representations of public ethics by public managers. The questions were developed from the results of our exploratory survey associated with public values highlighted by the literature (Nabatchi, 2011) retaining the previously proposed categorisation (political, legal, organisational and market). To allow a relevant and homogeneous principal component analysis, it was verified that each of the public values included in our questionnaire only appeared three times among the answers proposed to the respondents. The use of only part of the questions asked in this survey represents a "bias of context and halo" (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2012) related to the sensitivity of respondents to the survey context and its overall content, which can influence the answers in relation to each other. However, the overall content of the survey, relating as they do systematically and exclusively to public values can limit this type of bias.

The answers to the ten closed questions were analysed using a statistical tool (SPSS Statistics) to perform a principal components analysis of the responses obtained and highlight the most influential ethical values.

Thirdly, we propose an attempt to categorise these ethical values through a careful reading of their characteristics. To do so, we mobilise the model of social interaction rituals (Goffman, 1973; Collins, 2004) that allows us to distinguish values that come from interaction.

4. The approach of Chinese public managers to public ethical values

Our sample (Table 4) is comprised of a significant proportion of administrative, technical and financial managers (70% of respondents). This serves as a reminder that territorial public

management in China over the past 15 years in the emerging provinces (in the west and southwest of the country) has experienced a very strong development with the introduction of the programme to decentralise (1993) the functions of education, higher education and economic management to the provinces.

Age des managers	Effectifs	%	Profession
moins de 30 ans	20	14.08	Responsable de service
entre 30 et 40 ans	54	38,03	Cadre financier
entre 40 et 50 ans	44	30,99	Cadre technique
entre 50 et 60 ans	17	11.97	Cadre administratif
Plus de 60 ans	7	4.93	Cadre social ou RH
Total	142	100	Autres cadres
			Total
Pratiques religieuses	Effectifs	%	Ancienneté dans l'administration
Bouddhisme	14	9.86	Moins de 2 ans

Table 4. Sociological characteristics of the respondents (n = 142)

Further analysis of this sample (Table 4) suggests that most managers of this administration are between 30 and 50 years old (81% of respondents) and declare no religious practice (58%). This is a characteristic of management in China, which does not prevent the Chinese public managers from highlighting ethical values with reference to traditional cultural rituals. Finally, the fact that 61% of public managers have seniority in the public administration of fewer than or equal to 10 years justifies the interest of the cultural analysis of ethical values. Indeed, the generational bias highlighted often in this type of analysis is here dissipated given the relative intergenerational dispersion that can be observed.

The principal components analysis we carried out pinpointed eleven values of public ethics that are characteristic of the public managers interviewed. They are:

- **N1 Service quality**
- **N2 Collective harmony**

- N3 Compliance with procedures
- N4 Respect for *guanxi*
- N5 Respect for the "face"
- N6 Creativity and Innovation
- N7 Work and merit
- N8 Balance
- N9 Fairness and equality
- N10 Efficiency
- N11 Efforts

These eleven values all have a Cronbach alpha and KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) of over 0.70 (Hogan, 2007) necessary to justify a strong homogeneity between the representative variables of the ethical values (Table 5).

Tableau 5. Matrix of the components (Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation)

	Composants						
	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7
Variance (%)	20,12	17,10	12,22	9,42	7,66	6,22	5,00
Variance cumulée (%)	20,12	37,22	49,44	58,85	66,51	72,73	77,73
	0,051	0,002	0,001	0,742	0,004	0,720	0,608

The eleven values of public ethics are represented by variables N1 to N11. The cumulative variance is equal to 90.07% (Table 5). This means that the eleven selected components account for 90% of the variation in perceptions of public values (Table 5), which tends to justify the reliability of the

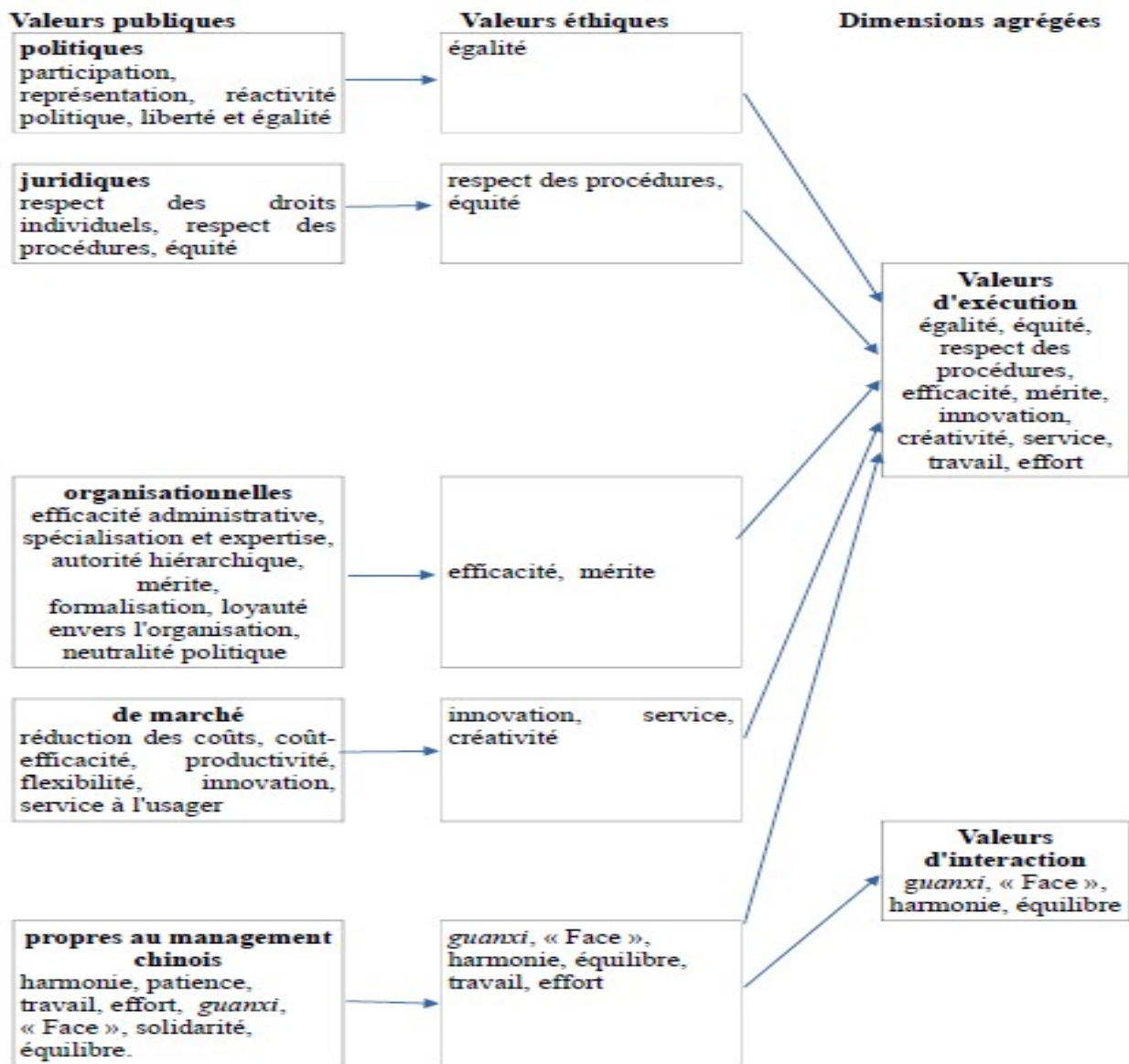
proposed model.

First, the exploratory investigation allowed us, alongside the public values highlighted by Nabatchi's model (2011), to propose a set of specific values characteristic of public management in China (Figure 2).

Secondly, our principal component analysis highlights ethical values (variables N1 to N11) specific to each category proposed by Nabatchi's model (*ibid.*). These ethical values can be aggregated into two dimensions that relate, firstly, to the performance of public service and, secondly, to the social interactions generated by this performance (Figure 2). The first (equality, fairness, respect for procedures, efficiency, merit, innovation, creativity, service, work, effort) concern the implementation of public service by the managers. They are found in all categories of values identified by Nabatchi and have the characteristics of itinerant values, that is to say carriers of different meanings depending on their membership category. Their initial characterisation by Nabatchi's model (2011) associated with their appearances in the results of our principal component analysis allows us to confirm their common meaning and their grouping into an aggregated dimension of public service performance values (Figure 2).

The second (*guanxi*, "face", harmony, balance) are the result of interactions directly between public stakeholders (Figure 2). The characterisation of these values does not yet appear in the literature and it should make it possible identify more precisely how these values make sense in a collective and interactive way for public managers.

Figure 2. The ethical values of performance and interaction



5. An attempt to characterise these values of public ethics

To characterise the values that are triggered by interaction and to thus support the case for the existence of these two categories of values of public ethics, we draw on the approaches of Goffman (1973) and Collins (2004).

If we apply these approaches to the values of public ethics identified above, it is possible to justify

the existence of values which meet the four characteristics of social interaction rituals (Collins, *op.cit.*): group membership (harmony), barrier to entry (*guanxi*), common focus of attention ("face"), common moods (balance) (Figure 3).

By comparing this model of the literature on Chinese culture, we justify, below, the pegging of these four ethical values, through their characteristics and their managerial implications, to the rituals of social interaction (Figure 3).

5.1. Collective harmony: a ritualised behaviour consistent with group membership and solidarity

The need for collective harmony is close to that which Faure (2003) calls the cult of rituals contained in one of the "five classics" of Chinese cultural literature (*Liji*, the Book of Rites) and that identify a set of interaction rituals that favour the rules of group membership and solidarity. For the public managers surveyed this has an important consequence: collective harmony is both a ritual and ethical practice that accompanies the performance of their duties. To build group solidarity, the Chinese are concerned with making relations harmonious by respecting interaction rituals (Gernet, 2001). Compliance with these rituals creates harmony and order (Barber, *op.cit.*) while contributing to a "routinisation" of actions (Peirce, *op.cit.*).

5.2. Respect for guanxi: a "barrier or boundary" ritual developing an emotional energy within a group

Respect for *guanxi* is described as a code of conduct of Chinese society that is expressed by putting the interests of the group or community above those of the individual. The family and the concentric network of knowledge are thus the basic cell of Chinese society (Gernet, *op.cit.*) respect for which is considered a fundamental decency in human interactions.

Respect for hierarchy is often obtained with reference to this concentric network of acquaintances (*guanxi*) and is explained by a number of behaviours, such as to take a back seat as the representative of these forebears and family according to their social position (Granet, 1968). The Chinese public managers express this by giving significant importance to the officials' network of family and

friends. Respecting the *guanxi* of each individual makes it possible to define a network of relationships (Zufferey, 2008) between public officials and create a positive energy for the harmony of the relationship.

5.3. Respect for the “face”: a ritual of attention to the other producing concerted relations

The importance of interaction rituals in the construction of the values of public ethics is shown in our results through respect for the "face", which is defined as one of the cornerstones of Chinese social interactions (Zufferey, *ibid.*). The Chinese "face", which is more complex than respect for the prestige of an individual as it is generally understood in the West (Faure, 2003), is built rather through a behaviour of restraint capable of promoting social interaction within a public organisation. Losing "face" is not just to lose your dignity or social recognition but rather means demonstrating a lack of modesty and discretion that prevents social interactions from taking place (Fernandez and Zheng, 2008). Respect for the "face" in the field of public ethics can therefore be compared to a common symbol that fosters interactions.

5.4. The relational balance: a ritual of collective moods fixing common moral rules

Contrary to the prejudices they often convey, order and hierarchy do not represent the main levers of decision and public policy in China. To the contrary, reaching out to the network of family and friends is more a quest for balanced action by searching in personal ethics for *modi operandi* that depend on the members of several networks of acquaintances (Cheng, 2007).

The search for balanced decisions and behaviours mentioned by the public managers interviewed refers to Chinese cultural traditions described, from the fifteenth century BC, in the "five classics" (Gernet, *op.cit.*) of Chinese culture (the *Yijing*, or book of changes, the *Shijing*, the book of odes, the *Liji*, the book of rituals, the *Shujing*, the book of documents, the *Chunqiu*, the Chronicles of spring and autumn). A number of the precepts mentioned in this literature are used as social interaction rituals (Goffman, *op.cit.*; Collins, *op.cit.*) that lead to the establishment of common moral rules that balance the relationships between individuals.

Figure 3. Characteristics and consequences of the observed interaction ethical values

Valeurs éthiques d'interaction	Caractéristiques
<i>L'harmonie collective</i>	Appartenance à un groupe
<i>Le respect du guanxi</i>	Barrière à l'entrée

The identification below of the ritual characteristics and consequences of these four values makes it possible to justify a public ethics of interactions with strong cultural dimensions that are particularly visible in the Chinese context. For Chinese public managers, the observance of these ethical values of interaction, through the ritual characteristics and the consequences they target (Figure 3) make it possible to structure a group or work team.

Conclusion

We have presented here two aggregate dimensions of values of public ethics observable in the Chinese managerial context.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this article. The first is heuristic. Through the analysis of public ethical values, we have built a model of analysis of itinerant public values (Nabatchi, 2011) that has both a common meaning but also different meanings according to the categories of values to which they belong.

Two theoretical developments are then proposed. A first development concerns the theory of New Public Value and comes from our proposal to categorise ethical values according to their relationship with the performance of public management or social interactions.

A second theoretical development lies in the characterisation, on the basis of their cultural dimensions, of ethical values of interaction that is largely ignored by the literature.

The contribution of our work to public management lies in the description of the role of the public manager as the bearer of individual ethical values related to both the performance of their work and interactions with their officials. This makes it possible in particular to advise policymakers to track

and measure the existence of these values in the behaviour of public managers (old and new) in order to assess their consistency with all public values and objectives of the organisation.

On the other hand, this work presents a number of methodological and empirical limits. A major limit of our research is the inability to claim a generalisation of our results given the contextual and cultural characteristics of China. Similarly, analysis of ethical values in China is not flawless as the political system in China and the need for proximity to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) requires strategies on the part of public officials and managers that can entail the acceptance of gifts received as a gratuity and that can go as far as major financial corruption (Chan and Ma, 2011). It is necessary to further explore this approach to analyse specifically whether this categorisation of public ethical values can be found in other countries or in other types of government (State, public hospital administration, social security).

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Annex

ETHICAL SURVEY AND PUBLIC VALUES

I- Political and legal ethical values

Question 1. The following values best represent the ethics of elected politicians: (please circle the figure corresponding to your choice)

Commitment	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Equality	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Freedom	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Representation of citizens	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Responsiveness	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Balance	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Patience	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

Question 2: The following values make it possible to control the ethics of public managers and officials: (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Compliance with procedures	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Respect for individual rights of users	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Fairness	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
<i>Respect for the guanxi</i> of users	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

II- Ethical values and organisation of work

Question 3. What are the ethical values that guide the performance of your public service mission? (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Service efficiency	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Fairness	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Productivity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
The balance of the decisions	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Loyalty	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Patience	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Others (specify)	

Question 4. Through the relationships with your employees, you are looking primarily (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

To be respected	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To be loyal	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To obtain social recognition	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Not to lose face	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To respect their social positions	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

To be in harmony with them	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Other (specify)	

Question 5. At ethical level, a good work organisation imposes on public managers: (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Flexibility	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Respect for social positions	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Neutrality	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Efficiency	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Expertise	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Authority	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Other (specify)	

Question 6. In your work team, you are looking primarily: (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

to foster group solidarity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To improve service quality	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

To improve productivity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To reward work and efforts	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To reward creativity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
To reward the most deserving	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Other (specify)	

III- Ethical and management values

Question 7. The following attitudes or behaviour correspond to the ethical values of the public manager: (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Loyal	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Efficient	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Deserving	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Fair	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Patient	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Neutral	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

Reactive	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Innovative	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Profitable	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Productive	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Show of solidarity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

Question 8. A good public manager is primarily: (please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

A hard worker	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Loyal to the organisation	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Fair with regard to staff	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
An expert in their field of activity	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Competent	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
In harmony with their employees and the organisation	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Attached to his subordinates and his hierarchy	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Other (specify)	

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Question 9. Above all, the purpose of your job is to: (please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Be efficient	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Offer a quality service	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Be innovative	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Control costs	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Respect budgets	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Other (specify)	

Question 10. What attitudes by a public manager do you feel are most detrimental to the performance of his or her duties? (Please circle the number corresponding to your choice)

Failure to correctly control budgets	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Not respecting the hierarchy	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Neglecting the quality of their work	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Not seeking harmony with their service	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____

Being too hasty	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Not making an effort when faced with difficulties	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree _____
Not respecting the networks (<i>guanxi</i>) of their employees	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree
Lacking humility and restraint	strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree
Other (specify)	

V- Identification

You are:

(Please tick the box corresponding to your situation)

	A woman
	A man

You have:

(Please tick the box corresponding to your situation)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 30 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 30 and 40 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 40 and 50 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 50 and 60 years old
<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 60 years old

You currently hold the following function:

(Please tick the boxes corresponding to your situation)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Department manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial and administrative manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sales manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	HR manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other managers
Others (specify)	

You have held this position for:

(Please tick the boxes corresponding to your situation)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 2 years
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 2 and 10 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 10 and 20 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 20 years

You are:

(Please tick the boxes corresponding to your situation)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Buddhist
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confucian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Taoist
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-practising