

Preface: The Governance aspects of Islamic Public Value

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The current theme issue of *Halduskultuur* is one of the publications emerging from "Islamic Public Value" (IPV), a John Templeton Foundation grant based at University College London's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (UCL IIPP), of which the co-editors, and the authors, are members. The project aims to uncover, and present as legitimate, the perspectives of otherwise underrepresented and underexplored Islamic institutions undertaking polycentric governance and administration and creating public value to better the lives of their constituents and neighbours, and this is the publication with a specific, one might even say classic, Governance focus.

The authors investigate, to this end, sometimes centuries-old autonomous indigenous institutions "still" operating across the Islamic world. What is specific about them, and what thus makes this pursuit special, is that they are not NGOs – a common-enough model – but institutions that are to various degrees part of the state sphere – some as *Ersatz*, some as a secondary government, some semi-integrated with central administration, and some fully part of the government of the day. They form what we call Indigenous Cooperative Institutions (ICIs), and they do so in an Islamic, and in particular in a Sufi, way.

This theme issue publication follows, in a chronological sense, the main book of the project (Drechsler, Chafik, and Kattel, eds., *Islamic Public Value: Theory, Practice, and Administration of Indigenous Cooperative Institutions*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2025), and another, previous *Halduskultuur* issue with a regional focus on Southeast Asia (vol. 24, no. 1). The concluding essay of the IPV theme in this issue, "Where we are (headed): Knowledge, Social Cohesion, and Public Value in Islamic Public Administration," by Massey, not only preliminarily sums up the project, but it also entails an insightful and sophisticated, original advance review of this book.

The three first essays are by authors who have contributed to the said book as well, and on similar topics. However, the respective chapters only overlap to a small extent, as necessitated by addressing similar or related phenomena. Indeed, one of the reasons to have a theme issue on Governance, to begin with, was precisely to give authors the opportunity to further develop key case studies or theoretical aspects that would have exceeded the scope of the

book, yet that are crucial to what after all is a central argument of the project, namely the contemporary existence of well-working alternative Islamic Governance models.

"*Vakuf Administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Closer Look at the Case of Sarajevo's Gazi Husrev-Begov Vakuf*," by Kaminski, Krupalija and Preljević, addresses, then, the specific case of one of the most important specific Islamic systems of how to – permanently – fund institutions involved in providing what would today be generally considered government tasks, an arrangement which has attracted copious scholarly attention over the last decades.

The "Comparative Analysis of Shura Councils in Qatar and Saudi Arabia: Islamic Public Values in Governance" by Abdulfatah Said Mohamed, even more directly, deals with what is arguably the one governance institution explicitly mandated in the *Holy Qu'ran*, the advisory council necessary to be heard when making governance decisions, and it does so by looking at and comparing two cases existing and arguably flourishing today.

As both *vakuf* and *shura* council are both specifically Islamic and working today, they convincingly – we trust – support the project's abovementioned contention that alternative Islamic governance institutions exist, and that they work well and beneficially for all.

"Exploring Islamic Public Administration: Ethnographic and Socio-Legal Approaches" by Urinboyev continues, on the other hand, the author's important and impactful theoretical exploration of the wider IPV topic, augmenting the argument by being grounded in social sciences outside public administration or even governance proper, disciplines that however need to inform and scaffold research on subjects such as the present one.

Finally, this issue of *Halduskultuur* also contains a section called "Is it worth reforming PA? The 'Statesmen's Panel' at KosovaPAR 2024," a moderated conversation among four scholar-statesmen with a special focus on public administration that took place as a panel discussion at the 2nd International Public Administration Reform conference in Prishtina, Kosova, in September 2024. This discussion is not part of the IPV theme, although Kosova is, with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey one of the four indigenous Muslim-majority countries in Europe, and although most of the contributors to this section are also involved with the IPV project: Van den Berg and Dobra as members of the Advisory Board, Prasojo in the same capacity and as a research stream leader, and Drechsler as Principal Investigator. But while this discussion does not address potential issues of Islamic governance in and of Kosova, or even aspects thereof, other elements are of direct relevance to the IPV conversation, and so it may be said that if one is interested in the issue theme, the Kosova panel will be of relevance as well.

These contributions demonstrate not only the historical depth and contemporary resilience of indigenous institutions, but also affirm the central thesis of the IPV project: That some well-functioning and socially cohesive models of governance happen to be normatively grounded in a sacred tradition, and yet or perhaps therefore, they are worth taking seriously. Indeed, in a world where the equivalence of mainstream or global governance with its Western version is an increasingly quaint matter, this issue underscores the need to broaden our understanding, both in scholarship and practice, of what good governance can be.

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